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Lucia A Keegan 10/27/2006 10:16:21 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/26/2016

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SUBJECT: FRENCH MFA ON IRAQ COMPACT PG MEETING, TALABANI VISIT, NATIONAL COMPACT, MNF-I MANDATE RENEWAL

REF: STATE 178869

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Poloff delivered reftel demarche to Franck Gellet, MFA DAS-equivalent for Iraq, and Bernard Chappedelaine, Iraq desk officer, on October 26. Chappedelaine said France would be represented at the 10/31 Preparatory Group meeting by Ambassador Jean-Pierre Guinhut, Inter-Ministerial Coordinator for Iraq Reconstruction. We also delivered the points to Guinhut's office, but he had already departed for Kuwait. His assistant, Nicolas Dignoire, promised to inform him of our views, and added that the delegation would be rounded out by representatives from the French Embassy in Kuwait.

¶2. (C) Both Gellet and Chappedelaine reiterated France's well-known position that the Compact document should not focus on economic development to the exclusion of security and political reforms. Chappedelaine said the French were somewhat "dubious" about a draft circulated in Baghdad on October 19, which they found to be fuzzier than earlier versions of the Compact document. "It read like a catalogue of every possible type of commitment (from the international community), and there were no precise benchmarks," said Chappedelaine. Even worse, in Gellet's view, was the lack of a timeline for tackling tough issues such as militias and corruption within the security services. Chappedelaine added that France does not envision making any new financial commitments at the Compact Adoption event expected in late November.

Talabani Visit

¶3. (C) Turning to the upcoming visit (Nov. 2-3) to Paris of

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, Chappedelaine said President Chirac would receive Talabani November 2. The Iraqi delegation will also meet with Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy, as well as with the President of the National Assembly and various members of the French Senate. Meetings with French business leaders and academics will round out the visit. The MFA's objective for the visit is to "maintain a regular dialogue" with Iraq's leaders on bilateral relations, Iraq's internal situation, the regional environment, and the Iraq Compact. No tangible deliverables are expected, although the French will reaffirm their willingness to continue cultural exchanges that allow Iraqi students and teachers to pursue studies/training in France.

Question on National Compact

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¶14. (C) In conclusion, Gellet said the MFA was "perplexed" by Ambassador Khalilzad's reference (during his October 24 press conference with General Casey) to a "national compact" among Iraq's leaders. He asked whether this national compact constituted the political dimension of the International Compact for Iraq, or whether it was a new national initiative independent of the International Compact. If the latter, he wondered whether the US was taking a more hands-on approach toward managing Iraq's internal politics.

Rollover of MNF-I Mandate

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¶15. (C) In a separate meeting October 25 with Nicolas Kassianides (who handles the Iraq portfolio in the MFA's IO directorate), Kassianides predicted that France would not create any ructions when it comes time to renew the UN mandate for MNF-I later this year. He noted that while last year France tried to leverage the extension of the mandate into defining a "political horizon" for the withdrawal of Coalition forces from Iraq, he had no indication that France would seek the inclusion of such language this year.

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